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THE
CALL OF THE HOME-LAND

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THE
CALL OF THE HOME-LAND

BY

G. B. KIMMEL

MINISTER OF THE FIRST CHURCH OF THE EVANGELICAL
ASSOCIATION IN INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

CLEVELAND, OHIO

COMMISSION ON EVANGELISM OF THE EVANGELICAL
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AN ABSTRACT OF AN ADDRESS DELIVERED
BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON EVANGELISM
AND THE STUDENTS OF NORTH-WESTERN
COLLEGE AT NAPERVILLE, ILL.,
NOVEMBER 14, 1908.

Every age has had its problems. Every age has had its crucial years, when the welfare and progress of the people seemed to tremble in the balance and called for the very highest and most heroic leadership.

Our age has its problems. I dare say, no generation has faced more complicated and perplexing ones than our own; problems social, commercial, political, moral, religious. Let me enumerate just a few of them briefly.

1. The Great Social Unrest that is everywhere apparent among all classes; a growing dissatisfaction with present social and industrial conditions, demanding radical changes in the social order; this feeling

manifesting itself not only in the growth of a type of socialism that is largely revolutionary and anarchistic, but in a constructive Christian socialism, endorsed by the most serious and thoughtful and patriotic everywhere.

2. The fierce antagonism between Capital and Labor; an antagonism, never so unyielding, never so thoroughly organized and bitter as to-day.

3. The Great Foreign invasion; hosts of immigrants flooding our great centers of population, with their ignorance, clannishness and un-American ideals.

4. Great Moral and Political Problems; issues that are putting our Republican form of Government to the severest test and seeming at times almost to threaten its perpetuity.

5. The Transitional Period in Theology through which we have been passing; the conflict between a rationalistic, destructive criticism and a reverent,

constructive scholarship; a conflict attacking the very fundamentals of our faith,—the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, the Divinity of Jesus Christ and His Atonement for Sin, the Efficacy of Prayer ; an attempt to eliminate the supernatural from Christianity, practically emasculating it. The effect of this teaching has been more paralyzing and disastrous than the casual observer realizes.

These are just a few of the many great vital problems confronting us to-day, in the solution of which the church must take an active and leading part. There was a time, when the work of the church was considered to be purely personal and individual. Religion was made entirely a matter of subjective experience, largely mystical in character, manifesting itself in private and public devotions. But the time has come when the church must recognize the larger social service she is to render to the world. Jesus likened the Kingdom of Heaven to leaven; but

if the leaven is to leaven the entire lump, it must be thoroughly mixed with the meal; if the salt is to preserve, it must be generously spread over or mixed with that which is to be preserved from corruption; if a candle is to shed forth light, it must be placed upon a candlestick. So the church must be militant in a very real, aggressive sense. These problems can only be solved by the thorough application of the teachings of Jesus to society to-day. What Jesus *began* both to do and to teach, His church must *continue* to do and to teach until His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. We must not cease emphasizing the personal, subjective experience in religion, but we must add to this, the social obligation and service the Christian owes the world. This is the mission of Christianity. We dare not shirk the responsibility nor neglect this opportunity.

These facts call for men of brain and brawn and heart; young men of vision, of

conviction, of courage, of sacrifice, to enter the Gospel Ministry, to assume the moral and religious leadership of the people, to point out the solution of these modern social problems by the application of the teachings of Jesus. Charles F. Aked, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, New York City, formerly of Liverpool, England, said recently, that if he could reach the ears of the best and brightest and brainiest of America's young men, those about to choose their vocation, he would make one great, urgent, passionate appeal for them to enter the Christian ministry, as presenting the most attractive field for largest usefulness and the greatest possible opportunity for social service. Every other profession is overcrowded; the ministry alone, the noblest of them all, is calling earnestly for recruits. No other profession offers such unparalleled opportunities for patriotic as well as religious service.

In spite of this crying need, in spite of these unparalleled opportunities for heroic

achievement for God and country, we face the humiliating situation of a falling off of candidates for the Christian ministry. Every seminary in the land laments this same shrinkage. Every denomination, our own included, is in urgent need of more men to occupy their old fields, while new fields ripe with opportunity, must be let unworked for lack of men. Every Conference in our own Church, after each session, reports from five to seven appointments "to be supplied." Our Bishops could at once place one hundred men if that number of properly equipped ministers could be secured. Open doors invite us to enter. Lack of suitable men prevents.

Why this scarcity of ministerial candidates?

1. The commercial spirit of our age. Flattering financial opportunities in other fields keep many young men from responding to the call to preach. Young men of ability, integrity, energy and faithfulness—the kind

God calls to preach, are just the men for whom the world is bidding high prices, to fill its places of trust and responsibility. The successful men in the ministry to-day are the men who would have succeeded in any of the lucrative positions—but who have risen above the sordid and mercenary spirit of the age.

2. A lack of spirituality in our homes and churches resulting in failure to awaken and foster spiritual ideals of life and service in the hearts of our young men. More Hannahs, Monicas and Susannah Wesleys are needed to-day, who will pray their sons into the ministry, and will then hold up before them, as they grow into youth and manhood, such ideals of life and service, that will make it easy for them to respond to the inner voice of God. In too many Christian homes parents are so ambitious for their boys to succeed in making money and in gaining position in the world, that should God call their sons to preach, the backward

pull of their environment and the opportunity for temporal advancement would be so great as to dissipate their attention to God's call. Oh, for a revival of family religion, so genuine and tender, that parents will consider it an honor to have their sons and daughters separated by God for special Christian service, and will do all in their power to create an atmosphere of such devotion to Christ and His cause, that it will be easy and natural for our young people to respond to such a call.

3. Failure on the part of the laity to make the work of the ministry worth while, in dignity, in scope, in enterprise, in appreciation. The laity must be aroused to a realization of the magnitude of the task before the Christian Church to-day; that it is not enough to be "holding our own" nor to be satisfied to do things to-day as they were done twenty-five or even ten years ago. The laity must be led to recognize the imperative value of the minister to the community,

so that they will be willing to gladly provide adequate, up-to-date church equipment, and will so heartily co-operate with the preacher in the carrying out of aggressive plans, as to attract young men of ability and ambition who are anxious to make an investment of their lives that will be worth while.

Besides these general conditions, social and religious, facing the Christian Church, we as a denomination have some problems, peculiarly our own, calling for immediate attention and presenting a most insistent plea for the very best, the ablest, the most consecrated young men from our homes everywhere, in country, town, and city.

1. The rapid shifting of our church work from the country to the city demands a complete change of method of work and of the character and equipment of our ministry. Our city churches and missions are demanding men with ability and training, who can cope with the modern social conditions in our cities. Bishop McDowell of the Metho-

dist Church describes the kind of a city minister our age needs in this strong appeal: "Who will preach the eternally, living Christ to the men of to-day, in modern speech, for imperative needs? Who will get such a hearing in modern Babel as to change Babel to Pentecost? Who can make room for himself and get a hearing in our modern crowd? Who can lead among so many leaders? Who can recall men to the glories and values of things invisible in the face of modern wealth and comfort? Who can effectively preach to modern men and women of culture the truth that frees? Who can fill the modern social and political spirit with the mind of Christ? Who can face and conquer the monster evils of current life? Who can take this vast complex modern age and unify its qualities, not destroy them, but fulfil them in Christ? Who can help Him to bring all these tremendous qualities into subjugation and captivity and thus to true power in Himself? He waits for such men,

that they may help Him in the finest struggle His Kingdom has ever seen." The hour of the strong man has come.

2. The transition in language from German to English. Many of our strongest German congregations are compelled to introduce the English language, if they hope to hold their young people and make any numerical gain. This requires most tactful and resourceful leadership, lest we suffer irreparable losses.

3. The wide-open door for our church in Japan and China calls for a strengthening of a home base of supplies. We must have a strong, well-informed, enthusiastic missionary ministry, who can enlist the prayers and financial support of the people for these outposts of our church.

The great scarcity of this type of candidates among us presents a very solemn and compelling call to prayer and an irresistible appeal to our young men. Some one has defined a call to foreign missionary service

as "a need; a need known; and ability to meet that need." If this be true of a call to labor in foreign lands, it is certainly true of a call to service at home.

But, in addition to the above threefold objective call, I firmly believe in a subjective call to the ministry. Many a conscientious young man says, "Yes, I see the great need of strong young men for the ministry—I love Christ and the church, I am deeply interested in the welfare of my fellow-men—if only I could be sure I am 'called to preach' I would so gladly do so."

What does it mean to be "called" to preach? This has troubled many young men. How shall I know I ought to preach? Will it be made known to me in a dream, or will I see a vision or hear an audible voice? Some men may have had such extraordinary experiences in their struggle and conflict to know the will of God; but by far, the great majority of successful men in the ministry have had no such unusual experience—theirs

was the result of a growing conviction of years, finally crystallizing in an open choice. Many have related the story of their "call." The following seems to be the common experience of most of these:

1. For years, perhaps from boyhood or from the day of conversion, "a still small voice" within has said, "I ought to preach; I believe God wants me to preach."

2. This "I ought" of conscience grew into the conviction, "I must—I dare not do otherwise," and was strongest and most fixed, when living nearest to Christ and when most active in His service.

3. Some dear friend, parent, or some old Christian in close sympathy with the Spirit of God expressed similar convictions.

4. Special Providential circumstances indicated the path of duty, helping to a choice.

5. Finally the Church recognized this fitness and God's seal upon the life and most gladly gave the authority to preach.

What are the rewards of the ministry?

The financial reward will always be summed up in the word "sacrifice"; and yet, let me say for the encouragement of the young men contemplating entering the ministry, a better day is coming, indeed has already come, in many parts of our church. A young man properly equipped, zealous, unselfish, Spirit-filled, will be appreciated and properly compensated.

But the richest reward of the faithful preacher is found, first in his own life, in his own growth and development, intellectually and spiritually. No other profession offers such an opportunity for self-improvement. Then,—the inexpressible joy of leading men to Christ, out of the entanglement and slavery of sin, into lives of purity and strength and usefulness; the constant inspiration of moulding character and directing Christian enterprise; the sacred privilege of becoming the trusted friend and counsellor of your people in the joys and successes, in the sorrows and tragedies of

life; the high honor of being permitted to throw the strength of one's manhood into the great moral struggles of his generation and of having an active part in God's plan for the redemption of the world—these are joys—these are rewards, angels covet; but only chosen men of God may experience!

“And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ Then said I, ‘Here am I, send me.’”

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